1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

841 or fowls. She must not take grain from the bins or approach the Hearth of the Departed. Except at the menarche, however, she may fetch wood and leaves which may be used by other members of the household; she may fish so long as it is not in a pond; she may even dance so long as it is not at a Penkarsita and she does not touch any man.

When I was taking photographs in Maria villages I frequently came up against these taboos. At Mokhpal I was unable to photograph a girl with strikingly Mongolian features because she was in her period—the people seemed genuinely afraid that the menstrual exhalations would break the lens. At Tikanpal, where I wanted to stage a group of girls making leaf-cups, I was not permitted to do so because one of them was in her period and must not sit on a mat. At Doriras a married girl refused to be photographed standing in front of the girls' dormitory because menstruating women were accustomed to sleep there.

During a wife's period a husband is subject to the laws of a 'little couvade'. No one will eat from his hands; no one will accept tobacco from his pouch. He must not cook or fetch water. He too must not go to the grain bins or approach the symbols of the Departed. He may go to a shrine, but he must not enter it; he may cut his clearing, but he must not fire it or sow seed. He may not hunt, carry a *kawar*-pole, climb a tree, cut grass or reap a crop. If he is a Perma or Gaita he may not perform any religious rite, and if he is a Gunia he cannot divine the cause of sickness.

842 It is generally believed by the Marias, as by the rest of India, that a woman is most likely to conceive if she has intercourse on the day she has her ceremonial bath at the close of the period.

886 As by other aboriginals the climacteric is accepted by the Marias as a matter of course. 'As it appears, so it disappears.' If an elderly woman or her husband dreams of a dried-up tank or stream, it means that this crisis is approaching.

V

843 Pregnancy is diagnosed by the cessation of the menses, vomiting, swelling of the breasts and a darkening of the nipples. 'The face dries a little.' It is generally supposed that a boy is more exacting and makes the mother look fragile and exhausted, while a girl keeps her fresh and well.

843 177 During pregnancy, Bison-horn Maria taboos are not exacting and my suspicion is that originally they were as few and as casual as those of the Hill Maria, and that any elaboration is due to the influence of the local Hindus who, on the whole, pay more attention to the pregnancy than to the menstrual taboos. In other words,

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

887 goes to the market and attends the festivals, though there is not so much for her in these as for the men. But her real hour of happiness is at a marriage. Here she may lay aside restraint and recapture the abandon of youth. Now she may drink heavily and for a few hours in blissful intoxication free herself of inhibitions and forget all that is tiresome and weary in her life. If the older men enliven the marriage scene with their buffoonery, [522 the older women divert it with their obscenity. There is nothing that they 831] may not say, little they may not do. Their songs and their dance movements are outrageous and never fail to rouse laughter in the crowd.

888 In a very few cases Muria women grow riggish in old age. They adorn themselves with many ornaments and wear bright-coloured saris. This behaviour is not approved.

You are an old woman,
Forget your dances.
You are an old woman,
Yet on your buttocks is a tiny cloth
And flowers are in your hair.

Although there is a rule that women should never use their ghotul titles after marriage, when a group of old women who have grown up together in the same ghotul meet in later life, they usually use the old names in order to awaken happy memories of the past. I am told that then they exchange reminiscences through half the night and that such times are among the happiest of their lives.

886 As elsewhere in aboriginal India, the climacteric does not appear to be dreaded or even to be specially noticed. In India, women are old at 45 and they greet the cessation of the menstrual period with relief that they are now saved from its embarrassements. I have not been able to find any myth about the climacteric; there does not seem to be any rule about it or any desire to avert it. It is a purely natural phenomenon. 'The stream that flowed so long is dry', 'the old tree has begun to wither'. Some people believe that the tree withers because 'no one goes to an old woman,[1] so her vagina has no grain to eat; no rain falls in her stream, so how can it flow?'

II. Death and the Ghotul

761 The ghotul is a place of separations. But when a chelik or motiari dies
883 there is a special feeling of sorrow, a sense of outrage, the conviction that something exceptional and abnormal has occurred. Sometimes the ghotul is closed for three days; where it is not closed the children gather sadly and there is no singing and there should be no intimacies. When older people die the dormitory is not closed. 'The ghotul is the *Dinda-mahāl*, the Palace of the Unmarried. As the Raja's Palace is not shut when people die in the town, neither is ours. But if two or three of the chelik and motiari die, then we shut it.' At Dongrigura, they said that when a chelik died, the motiari wept and next day initiated one of the younger boys and gave him the dead chelik's title, so that there might be no gap in their fellowship. When the Subedar died, they made his little brother Subedar next day and gave him as 'husband' to the Subedarin, his *anga*, or elder brother's 'widow'.

The death of a chelik or motiari is always abnormal. The death of a little child or of a child in the womb is no less unnatural. 'Just as in a field, rice

[1] A rather cynical proverb runs: 'How disgusted is a man who eats stale food in the morning and goes to bed with an old woman at night.'